

REGION 4

INTRA-SERVICE SECTION 7 BIOLOGICAL EVALUATION FORM

[Note: This form provides the outline of information needed for intra-Service consultation. If additional space is needed, attach additional sheets, or set up this form to accommodate your responses.]

Originating Person: Kevin Roy

Telephone Number: 337/291-3120 **E-Mail:** Kevin_Roy@fws.gov

Date: September 21, 2011

PROJECT NAME (Grant Title/Number): Lake Hermitage Marsh Creation Project - Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act

I. Service Program:

Ecological Services

Federal Aid

Clean Vessel Act

Coastal Wetlands

Endangered Species Section 6

Partners for Fish and Wildlife

Sport Fish Restoration

Wildlife Restoration

Fisheries

Refuges/Wildlife

II. State/Agency: Louisiana/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Project is co-sponsored by the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority

III. Station Name: Ecological Services - Louisiana Field Office

IV. Description of Proposed Action (attach additional pages as needed):

The Lake Hermitage Marsh Creation Project (BS-42) was approved for construction in January 2009 by the Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force, through the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act. As the lead Federal agency, the Service, along with the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, will begin construction in January 2012.

The project is located in Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana, east and south of Lake Hermitage (attached figure). The project will restore marsh south of Lake Hermitage and protect the integrity of the eastern and southern lake rim to prevent breaching into the interior marsh. Terraces will provide additional wetland habitat. The marsh creation and shoreline restoration features will partially restore historic hydrology to the marshes east of Lake Hermitage.

Specific goals of the project are: 1) Create 456 acres of marsh and nourish an additional 93 acres; 2) Restore 7,400 linear feet (52 acres of shoreline marsh created) of the eastern Lake Hermitage shoreline, and 3) Create 6.5 acres of emergent habitat by constructing 7,300 linear feet of earthen terraces.

Sediments from the Mississippi River will be hydraulically dredged and pumped via pipeline to create/nourish approximately 549 acres of marsh. Containment dikes will be constructed as necessary. Approximately 7,300 linear feet of terraces (6.5 acres subaerial) will be constructed. The terrace slopes will be planted with smooth cordgrass, on 2.5-ft centers and the perimeter of the terrace crowns will be planted with one row of seashore paspalum on 5-ft centers. Approximately 7,400 linear feet (52 acres created) of shoreline will be restored with dredged material from the Mississippi River. Natural bayous along the shoreline will remain open. The shoreline slope will be planted with 4 rows of smooth cordgrass on 2.5-ft centers. The shoreline crown will be planted with 5 rows of seashore paspalum on 5-ft centers.

V. **Pertinent Species and Habitat:** The endangered pallid sturgeon occurs in waters of the Mississippi River. The endangered West Indian Manatee may occur in coastal waters near the project area.

A. **Include species/habitat occurrence map:**

B. **Complete the following table:**

| SPECIES/CRITICAL HABITAT | STATUS ¹ |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Pallid Sturgeon | E |
| West Indian Manatee | E |

¹STATUS: E=endangered, T=threatened, PE=proposed endangered, PT=proposed threatened, CH=critical habitat, PCH=proposed critical habitat, C=candidate species

VI. **Location (attach map):**

A. **Ecoregion Number and Name:** Region 4 - Area 1 - Lower Mississippi River Ecosystem

B. **County and State:** Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana

C. **Section, township, and range (or latitude and longitude):** All or a portion of the following:

Center located at – Latitude 89 degrees 51 minutes 3.51 seconds; Longitude 29 degrees 33 minutes 8.15 seconds.

D. **Distance (miles) and direction to nearest town:** Approximately 3 miles southwest of West Pointe a la Hache, Louisiana.

E. **Species/habitat occurrence:** Pallid Sturgeon/Mississippi River. West Indian Manatee/coastal waters.

VII. **Determination of Effects:**

A. **Explanation of effects of the action on species and critical habitats in item V. B (attach additional pages as needed):**

| SPECIES/ CRITICAL HABITAT | IMPACTS TO SPECIES/CRITICAL HABITAT |
|------------------------------|---|
| Pallid Sturgeon | Approximately 4.0 million cubic yards of sediment will be dredged, via hydraulic cutterhead, from the bottom of the Mississippi River to restore marsh in the project area. |
| West Indian Manatee | Construction equipment (e.g., boats, barges, etc) will be used in coastal waters within and near the project area. |

B. Explanation of actions to be implemented to reduce adverse effects:

| SPECIES/ CRITICAL HABITAT | ACTIONS TO MITIGATE/MINIMIZE IMPACTS |
|------------------------------|---|
| Pallid Sturgeon | <p>The following construction guidelines have been placed within the project plans and specifications.</p> <p>“To ensure protection of the pallid sturgeon, all personnel associated with the project will be informed of the potential presence of the pallid sturgeon and take actions to induce them to leave the immediate work area prior to dredging regardless of water depth or time of year. The following actions shall be implemented to help prevent any potential project related direct or indirect effects to the pallid sturgeon:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The cutterhead shall remain completely buried in the bottom material during dredging operations. 2) If pumping water through the cutterhead is necessary to dislodge material or to clean the pumps or cutterhead, etc., the pumping rate shall be reduced to the lowest rate possible until the cutterhead is at mid-depth, where the pumping rate can then be increased. 3) During dredging, the pumping rates shall be reduced to the slowest speed feasible while the cutterhead is descending to the channel bottom.” |
| West Indian Manatee | <p>The following construction guidelines have been placed within the project plans and specifications.</p> <p>“The following precautions will be implemented from May to October, when manatees have the greatest potential for entering the project area:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) All on-site project personnel are responsible for observing water-related activities for the presence of manatee(s). 2) All personnel associated with the project shall be instructed about the possible presence of manatees and the need to avoid collisions with and injury to manatees. Any sighting of, collision with, or injury to a manatee shall be immediately reported to the Engineer.” |

VIII. Effect Determination and Response Requested: Not applicable

| SPECIES/ CRITICAL HABITAT | DETERMINATION ¹ | | | RESPONSE REQUESTED |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|----|----|-----------------------|
| | NE | NA | AA | |
| Pallid Sturgeon | | X | | |
| West Indian Manatee | | X | | |
| | | | | |

¹DETERMINATION/RESPONSE REQUESTED

NE = no effect. This determination is appropriate when the proposed action will not directly, indirectly, or cumulatively impact, either positively or negatively, any listed, proposed, candidate species or designated proposed critical habitat. Response Requested is optional but a "Concurrence" is recommended for a complete Administrative Record.

NA = not likely to adversely affect. This determination is appropriate when the proposed action is not likely to adversely impact any listed, proposed, candidate species or designated proposed critical habitat or there may be beneficial effects to these resources. Response Requested is a "Concurrence."

AA = likely to adversely affect. This determination is appropriate when the proposed action is likely to adversely impact any listed, proposed, candidate species or designated proposed critical habitat. Response Requested for listed species is "Formal Consultation." Response Requested for proposed or candidate species is "Conference."

Kevin J. Roy
Signature (originating station)

9-21-2011
Date

Senior Field Biologist
Title

IX. Reviewing Ecological Services Office Evaluation:

A. Concurrence Nonconcurrence

B. Formal consultation required

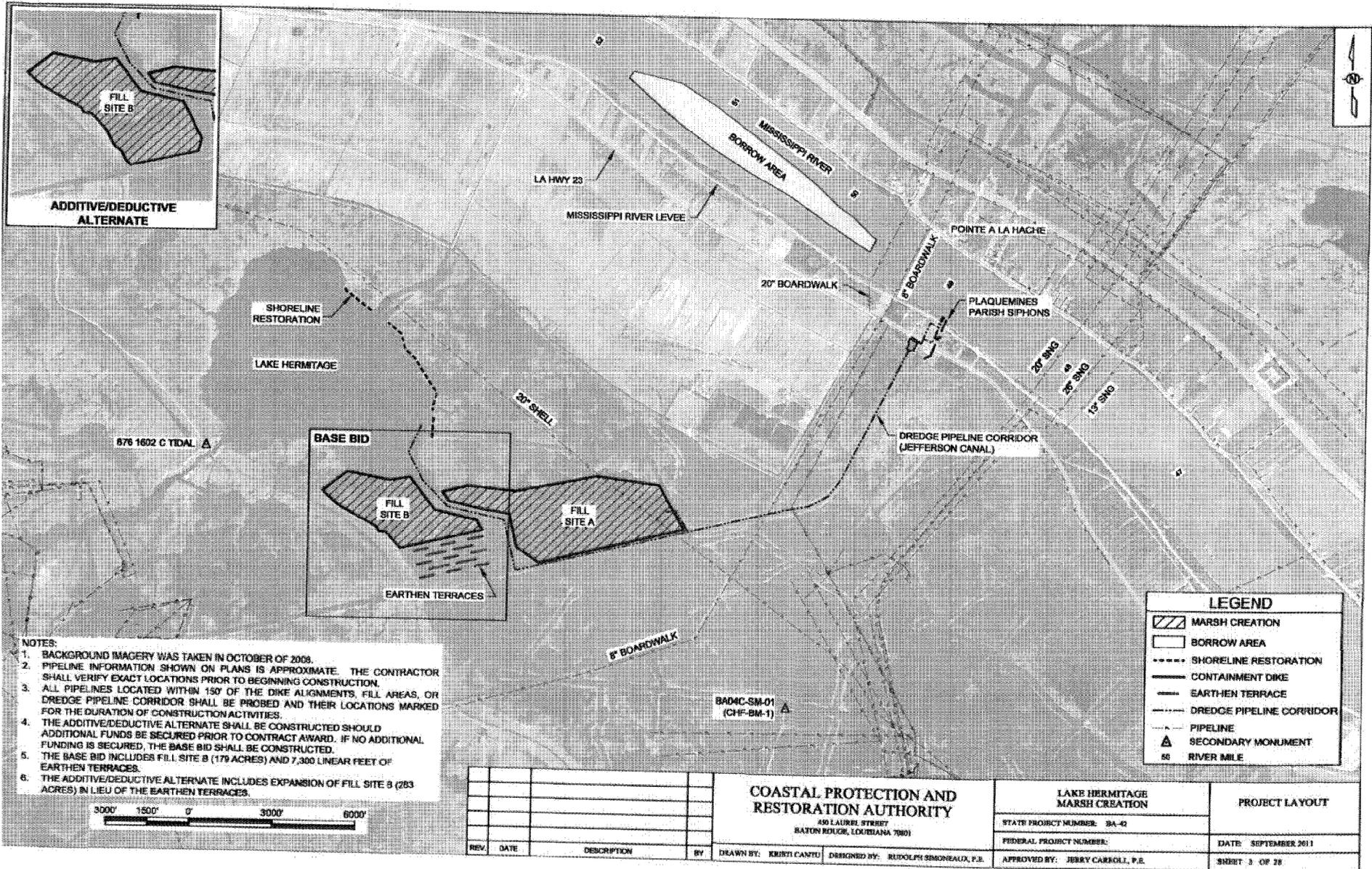
C. Conference required

D. Informal conference required

E. Remarks (attach additional pages as needed):

Kenneth J. Graham 9/30/11
Signature Date

Regional Section 7 Coordinator, Southeast Region
Title Office



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